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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2141  
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 4535  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 4789  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 9903  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 2776  
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UNCLAS KATHMANDU 001714

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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [NP](#)  
SUBJECT: JANUARY POLITICAL POLL SHOWS SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY

Summary  
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¶1. (U) In May 2006, the Asia Foundation and a group called Interdisciplinary Analysts released the results of a poll, "Nepal Contemporary Political Situation -- II," conducted across Nepal in January, which showed that the overwhelming majority of Nepalese thought democracy was right for Nepal. People said the way to solve the Maoist problems was through talks. Hardly anyone knew what a Constituent Assembly meant. People clearly supported international assistance in negotiating, and monitoring, a peaceful agreement. End Summary.

Democracy Is Right For Nepal  
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¶2. (U) An overwhelming majority of poll respondents (74 percent) indicated that democracy was a suitable system for Nepal. However, answers regarding the method for creating democracy differed. A large number (46 percent) thought that an interim government should have been formed including Maoists in order to bring them to the bargaining table. Only 16 percent thought a new constitution should be formulated; of these, 46 percent thought the new constitution should be formed by a Constituent Assembly, 22 percent by a House of Representatives, and 10 percent by a committee nominated by the King. Thirty-six percent of respondents said that democracy would bring about an increase in corruption.

¶3. (U) Although 55 percent of those surveyed had heard of Constituent Assembly, only 15 percent actually knew what it was. There was almost an even split of opinion about Maoist commitment to democracy -- nearly 40 percent thought that the Maoists were committed to democracy, while nearly 37 percent thought they were not.

Solutions To Maoist Problem  
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¶4. (U) Nearly 63 percent of respondents thought the Maoist problem would be solved through talks. Fifty-two percent did not think the government had increased security against Maoist attacks during the time since the King took over on February 1, 2005. Lack of functioning local government resulting from the Maoist insurgency did not affect people

much, with 54 percent stating that they had no problems due to the lack of local government. When asked if the Maoists were serious about restoring peace, 23 percent said yes and 36 percent said no.

#### Support for International Role

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15. (U) Around 54 percent of respondents wanted a third-party mediator in peace talks, indicating a preference for the United Nations or a human rights organization. Nearly 59 percent wanted to bring the Maoist People's Army and the Royal Nepalese Army (now the Nepal Army) under international supervision.

#### Report Includes Cross-Section Of Society

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16. (U) The survey was conducted January 5-25 by the Asia Foundation and Interdisciplinary Analysts. The poll surveyed 3,000 people in Nepal; 1,500 from rural areas and 1,500 from urban areas. The breakdown of male and female was approximately 50 percent each. Respondents represented districts from across the country, giving information from all five regions, and respondent numbers were based on district population. Rural residents were more likely to respond "I don't know" or "I can't say" to questions than urban residents.

#### Comment

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17. (SBU) Although the data is five months old, it was collected after the November 2005 12-point understanding between the Maoists and the seven-party alliance. Nepalis' support for democracy likely intensified during the People's Movement. Whether people's trust in the Maoists has increased is an open, and key, question. The poll reflects the yearning of the Nepalese people for success in the ongoing peace process -- especially given the recent talk of UN monitoring of the cease-fire between the GON and the Maoists. Post plans to conduct a poll between July and September on perceptions of the United States which will include some political questions as well.

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